

edward johnson building
faculty of music
university of toronto



THE ORFORD QUARTET
(UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO QUARTET IN RESIDENCE)

Andrew Dawes, Violin
Kenneth Perkins, Violin
Terence Helmer, Viola
Marcel St-Cyr, Cello

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1980

3 P.M.

WALTER HALL

PROGRAM

Quartet in G Major, No. 1, Op. 54

Joseph Haydn

Allegro con brio
Allegretto
Menuetto (Allegretto)
Finale: Presto

The quartets of Op. 54 are sometimes referred to as the "Tost" Quartets, in honour of the enterprising violinist Johann Tost, who journeyed to Paris in 1788 in search of fame and fortune, carrying with him the Symphonies No. 88 and 89 of Haydn, as well as the six quartets comprising Op. 54 and Op. 55. Haydn had given Tost the responsibility of getting these works published, and their appearance augmented Haydn's already widespread reputation. However, it seems that the composer was forced to wait a very long time for the actual payment to arrive from Paris.

The joyful vitality of the Allegro con brio derives from its soaring first violin line and throbbing bass, elements to be found in countless symphonies and concertos of a few decades previous, but transformed through Haydn's genius into themes of Classical balance and virile individuality.

A peaceful opening melody is tinged with chromatic colours as the Allegretto unfolds. Moving through sections of chromatic and sometimes dissonant writing, Haydn paradoxically creates an atmosphere of almost timeless beauty. The vigorous Menuetto and graceful Trio, with its cello undulations, is followed by a humorous Finale. The jocular Rondo theme, varied in Haydn's inimitable manner, serves as a fitting vehicle to conclude this spirited work.

Quartet No. 8, Op. 110

Dmitri Shostakovich

Largo
Allegro molto
Allegretto
Largo
Largo

Dmitri Shostakovich wrote his Quartet No. 8 in 1960. It is a

solemn work in five joined movements, the last an epilogue and return of the opening Largo. The fourth movement is slow and sombre, the second, one of relentless urgency, and the third, an Allegretto of strange and captivating sonorities, functions as a Scherzo.

The recurring motive of the quartet is built on the notes D, E flat, C and B natural, known in German notation as D, Es, C, and H. By replacing Es with S, we arrive at the monogram D. S. C. H, or the initials of the composer's name, the SCH corresponding to the beginning of his surname in the Cyrillic alphabet. This autobiographical thematic signature, incidental melodic quotations from his own First Symphony, and allusions to old Russian revolutionary songs used in his Eleventh Symphony, combine to form a fabric of deeply-felt expression.

The composer has said that his Eighth Quartet is a personal dedication to and a secular requiem for the victims of Fascism, a conception reinforced by the preponderance of slow-paced movements. Quiet contemplation is an integral part of Shostakovich's musical philosophy, as powerful in its effect as the triumphant spirit of his famous symphonic finales.

INTERMISSION

Quartet in E Minor, No. 2, Op. 59

Ludwig van Beethoven

Allegro
Molto Adagio
Allegretto
Finale: Presto

Completed in 1806, the Op. 59 quartets are dedicated to the Russian connoisseur and ambassador in Vienna, Count Rasumovsky. In these three works, Beethoven realizes the expressive capacity of the string quartet genre to an extent never dreamed of by earlier composers.

The opening movement of Op. 59, No. 2 is a sonata-form of greatly expanded dimensions. Beethoven creates contrast between the muscular chords and expectant silences which articulate the formal outlines, and longer, more lyrical passages. The pervading mood is intense and questioning, with the abrupt chords and pauses of the introduction serving as the initial motive for the development. A lengthy coda balances the large proportions of the previous sections,

and recalls the same questioning chords, but now with a sense of resolution.

In Beethoven's own words, the slow movement "must be played with much feeling." Here is a melodic outpouring of great beauty and deep inspiration, conceived by the composer, according to a contemporary account, as he gazed up at the stars; the harmony of the spheres cast in human terms.

The Allegretto, in the minor tonality and rhythmically syncopated acts as a foil to the Trio in the major, built around a Russian theme. This is passed from one voice to another and finally moves into a four-part stretto, adding to the weight of this highly original scherzo-form. The Presto abounds in broad, sweeping, even orchestral effects, and must have overwhelmed its first audience as the most brilliant quartet finale that had yet been written.

Notes by Patricia Sauerbrei.

Next Concert: Faculty Artists Series Program IV, Saturday,
March 1, 1980 at 8 pm. Walter Hall

Opera Dates: Dialogues of the Carmelites, MacMillan Theatre,
March 7, 8, 14, 15, 1980. 8 pm.